

Central Intelligence Agency



Washington D C 20505

DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

21 April 1988

Iranian Reaction to Recent Military Setbacks

Summary

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(b)(3)

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### Iranian Aggressiveness

Iran's firing on US forces, the placing of mines in the Gulf earlier in the month, and Tehran's recent hostility toward Saudi Arabia over the issue of Iranian participation in the annual pilgrimage to Mecca underscore Iran's continuing hostile stand toward its enemies. [REDACTED]

Iran, since the revolution in 1979, generally has exhibited a threatening posture toward its neighbors. Over the years, the degree of overt Iranian hostility has fluctuated, but since the US escort program began last July, it has remained at a high level. (See attached list for a chronology of incidents). Iran has demonstrated its hostility during the past year by:

--Mining Gulf shipping lanes last summer, including the placement of mines obviously intended to damage the first US-escorted convoy. One hit the Bridgeton;

- Continuing the mining until US forces caught the Iran Ajr red-handed;
- Firing 10 Silkworm missiles at Kuwait. One hit a US-owned ship; one hit a reflagged tanker; one struck Kuwait's Sea Island Terminal;
- Increasing its attacks on ships in the Saudi trade after the United States began protecting Kuwaiti shipping;
- Instigating provocative demonstrations by Iranians in Mecca during the annual Hajj, resulting in riots and the deaths of at least 400 pilgrims;
- Planning an attack on Saudi offshore oil facilities in October. The Saudis apparently forestalled the strike by taking defensive measures after being alerted by US Intelligence;
- Attacking more ships in the Gulf in December than in any other single month of the war;
- Increasing the ratio of its ship attacks this year relative to Iraqi ship attacks. The attacks have been running three to two in favor of Tehran (see attached chart);
- Conducting more lethal ship attacks by occasionally attempting to kill crewmen or to inflict more than superficial damage;
- Engaging in more violations of Gulf states' territorial waters in its pursuit of ships to attack;
- Reportedly sending an agent to sabotage the Bahrain oil refinery;
- Resuming mining this month. [REDACTED]

Viewed from this perspective, Iran's resumption of mining this month was not a sudden, isolated incident but a shift in tactics and targets and a deliberate raising of tensions within the context of a basically aggressive policy Tehran has followed all along. We have no specific information on why Iran resumed the mining, but Tehran apparently perceived that it was losing the initiative to the United States and its Gulf allies. The Iranians knew the mining would provoke a US reaction. They probably weighed the risk of a US military strike but concluded that the risk was acceptable, believing that the mines were more likely to strike a commercial ship--a situation reducing the prospects of significant US retaliation. At a minimum, the mines were designed to show the Gulf states that their security had not been enhanced by the increased US naval presence or US warnings to Tehran about mining. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Pages: 4-6

Exemptions: (b)(1), (b)(3)

[REDACTED]

Iranian Actions in the Persian Gulf  
Since the US Escort Program Began

21 Jul -- First Earnest Will convoy began.

24 Jul -- SS Bridgeton hits mine west of Farsi Island.

25 Jul -- Additional mines discovered west of Farsi; probably laid at the same time as the mine that the Bridgeton hit.

01 Aug -- Riots in Mecca instigated by Iran.

10 Aug -- Tanker hits mine off of Khawr Fakkan in the Gulf of Oman.

15 Aug -- A supply ship sinks after hitting mine off Khawr Fakkan.

18 Aug -- Mines, probably old, found in shipping lanes off Kuwait and Abu Musa.

01 Sep -- Iran fires a Silkworm missile that lands in the water off Kuwait.

04 Sep -- Iran fires a Silkworm missile that overflies an anchored reflagged tanker near the Sea Island terminal and impacts on the beach south of Mina al Ahmadi.

05 Sep -- Iran fires a Silkworm missile that hits the water off Kuwait.

21 Sep -- The Iran Ajr is captured while laying mines.

28 Sep -- A minefield is discovered in a shipping lane off Dubayy.

03 Oct -- Iranian naval forces apparently attempt to attack Saudi/Kuwaiti oilfield; thwarted by strong Saudi naval and air presence.

08 Oct -- Three Iranian small boats fire on two US helicopters that return fire and sink two of the craft.

15 Oct -- US-owned tanker hit by Silkworm missile while anchored off Kuwait.

16 Oct -- Reflagged tanker hit by Silkworm missile while anchored off Kuwait.

22 Oct -- Silkworm missile hits the Sea Island terminal off Kuwait.

24 Oct -- Kuwaiti Shias, probably supported by Iran, bomb the Pan Am ticket office in Kuwait.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

03 Nov -- Iran is suspected in a bombing near the Kuwaiti Interior Ministry.

14 Nov -- Two mines destroyed by Allied minesweepers in the southern Persian Gulf.

19 Nov -- US naval forces destroy several mines west of Farsi Island.

07 Dec -- Iran fires a Silkworm missile at the Kuwaiti Sea Island terminal; it hits a reflector barge.

07 Mar -- Iranian Sassan oil platform fires on two passing US helicopters.

March -- Iranian sponsored sabotage campaign against Saudi facilities abroad begins.

14 Apr -- USS Roberts strikes mine in the central Persian Gulf.

18 Apr -- Iranian naval units respond against US naval forces after the US destruction of two Iranian oil platforms. Iranian forces attack a UAE oilfield south of Abu Musa Island.

19 Apr -- Additional mines discovered by Allied forces near Farsi Island and in the southern Gulf.

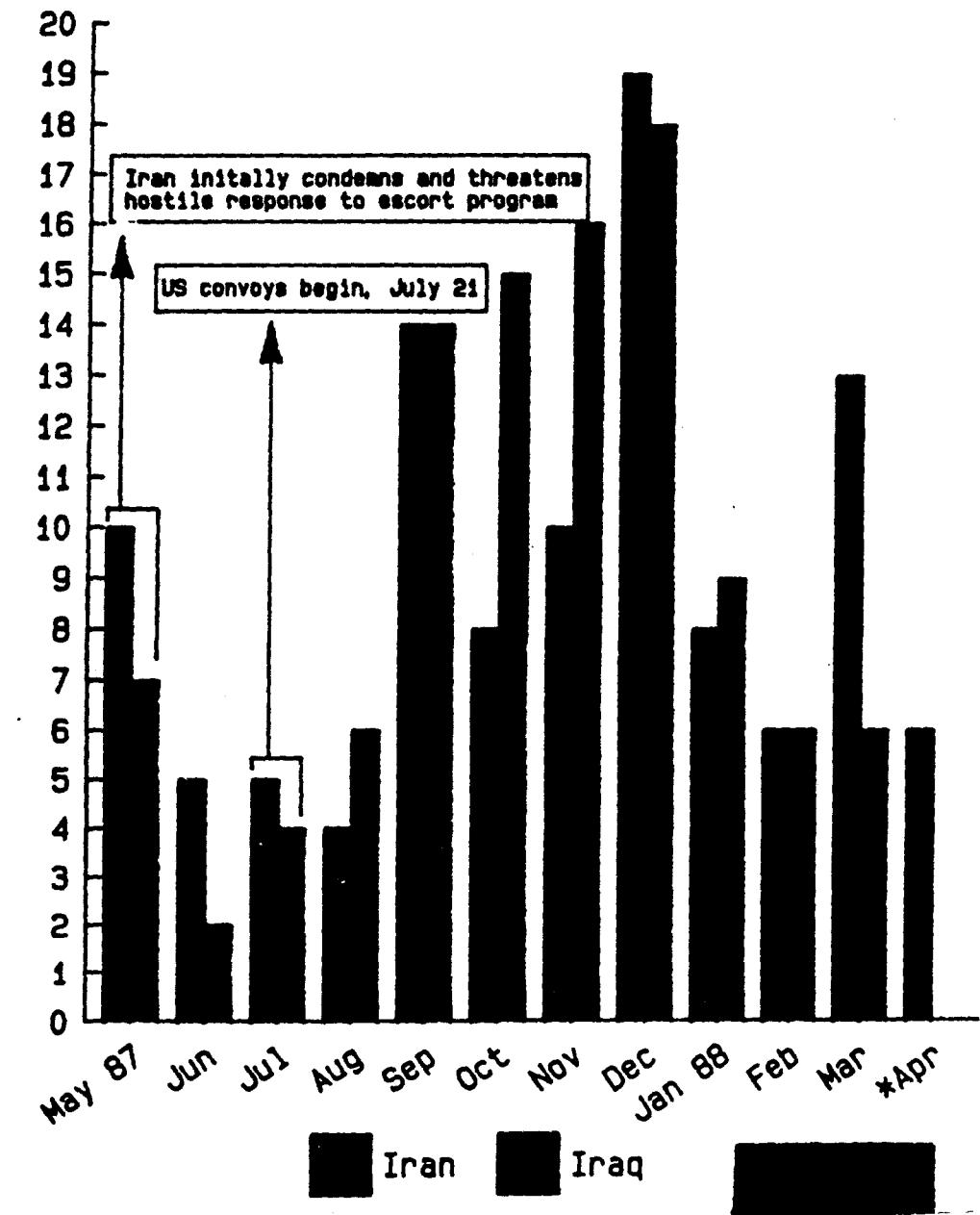
20 Apr -- Iran fired two possible Silkworm [redacted] at Kuwait.

[redacted]

[redacted]

## Ship Attacks in the Persian Gulf (Since Protection Program Announced)

Number of  
attacks



\* No Iraqi ship attacks as of 20 April